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Let's Talk About "Fake News"

We all hear about fake news more and more. It is increasingly important to be thoughtful about what we see and read online. Made up stories are passed around quickly. Even images can be unreal. It can feel overwhelming.

An experiment conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that adults believed false "news" reports about 20 percent of the time.

Meanwhile, a poll by Common Sense Media found that less than half of kids surveyed said they could tell false stories from real ones.[1]

If you are struggling to keep up with scams and misinformation, you are not alone!

What can families and students think about when using online sources?

1. **Look carefully at the design of the site or images.**
    *   Fake news sites often don't look professional. They often have an unusual number of ads.
    *   Images might initially seem familiar, but closer inspection might show they have been altered slightly.
    *   Look at photos to see if you spot weird things. For example, in a fake image, a person might have six fingers.

2. **Think about the source.**
    *   If you haven't heard of the source, search online for more information.
    *   Double check the information by looking at sources you know have good reputations.

3. **Check the web domain. Does it look odd?**
    *   Many fake sites end with ".org.co" or ".kl" or some other strange ending. For example, it might be "fnesc.ca.co"

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1   https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/parents/how-to-spot-fake-news/

4. **Look at the author of the information you are reading.**
   - If there is no author, think twice.
   - If there is an author, but it is a name you don't know, search that name on the internet. What else have they written?

5. **Consider who is quoted in the information you are reading.**
   - Are they anonymous sources? Are they unreliable, or people or organizations you have never heard of? Are there no sources at all?
   - If you feel unsure, double check.

6. **Check the messaging.**
   - Oftentimes, fake articles push one point of view.
   - They may have an angry tone or include information that seems hard to believe.
   - Think critically.

7. **Look at the writing style.**
   - If there are many typos, misspelled words, or too much punctuation, think twice about the source. For example, if the sentences all end in !!!!!!, be suspicious.

8. **Look to other sources to confirm the information. It never hurts to look at a number of sites for information on a topic.**
   - Getting a variety of views helps us be better informed.
   - See what others are saying about an issue until you feel confident about what you see and read online.

9. **As AI becomes more sophisticated, reverse image searching is an important tool for confirming the reality of photos. There are many tools online and in App stores that you can use to find out when and where a photo was taken, who took it, and where it appears online.**

10. **Think carefully about information you receive from people you know, as well.**
    - Almost a quarter of adults have shared a false news story, and we're least likely to fact-check news and other things that come to use through people we know and trust.
    - It is easy for any of us to share false information by mistake.

Sources used:
www.mediasmarts.ca
www.microsoft.com